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Message Text

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SUBJECT: REPRESENTATION ON GOI PRESSURE ON INDIAN EMPLOYEES
OF FOREIGN MEDIA--VOA DELHI BUREAU EMPLOYEE
HARI KAPOOR

REF: NEW DELHI 8640 AND 8596

1. ON THE OCCASION OF HAVING OTHER BUSINESS WITH PIB'S DR. BAJI JULY 3, I RAISED QUESTION OF VOA DELHI BUREAU'S INDIAN REPORTER, HARI KAPOOR. (BAJI IS PRINCIPAL INFORMATION OFFICER, PIB, MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND, NOW, CHIEF CENSOR.)

2. I OBSERVED THAT OUR AMERICAN VOA BUREAU CHIEF HERE HAD TOLD ME THAT BAJI'S MINISTER (SHUKLA) HAD CALLED KAPOOR IN ON JUNE 28 ALONG WITH OTHER INDIAN EMPLOYEES OF FOREIGN MEDIA TO EXPLAIN THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE NEW CENSORSHIP RULES. (AS REFTELS REPORT, THESE INDIAN EMPLOYEES WERE TOLD THAT THEY WOULD BE HELD RES-
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PONSIBLE FOR ANY NEWS CARRIED BY THEIR PARENT ORGANIZATIONS.)

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3. I SAID OTHER FOREIGN NEWS REPRESENTATIVES, AS I WAS SURE DR. BAJI WAS WELL AWARE, WERE UPSET BY THE POSITION INTO WHICH THEIR INDIAN EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN PUT AS A RESULT OF MINISTER SHUKLA'S STATEMENTS OF JUNE 28. SO WAS OUR VOA AMERICAN BUREAU CHIEF MILLER. IN FACT, MILLER HAD DECIDED THAT IN FUTURE HE, NOT KAPOOR, WOULD RESPOND TO ANY PIB INVITATION TO DISCUSS CENSORSHIP GUIDE-LINES, ETC.

4. IT SHOULD BE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD BY YOUR MINISTER, I SAID, THAT KAPOOR IS MERELY AN EMPLOYEE OF VOA WHO HAS NO INDEPENDENT AUTHORITY TO FILE A SINGLE WORD TO VOA WITHOUT MILLER'S APPROVAL; AND HE CERTAINLY HAS NO SAY-SO ON WHAT VOA CARRIES IN ITS NEWS, WHICH IS BASED ON ALL THE WIRE SERVICES.

5. BAJI NOTED THAT THIS WAS THE SAME POSITION ALREADY EXPLAINED TO HIM BY OTHER FOREIGN MEDIA BUREAU CHIEFS. "YES," I SAID, "WITH THE IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE THAT KAPOOR IS NOT ANYBODY'S EMPLOYEE, BUT AN EMPLOYEE OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT."

6. COMMENT: BAJI WAS UNEASY AND NOT ANXIOUS TO PURSUE THIS LINE OF CONVERSATION. AS LONG AS VOA CONTINUES TO DRAW A CAREFUL DISTINCTION BETWEEN VOA'S CENSOR-CLEARED REPORTS FROM DELHI AND ALL OTHER NEWS, COMMENT AND EDITORIAL OPINION ON INDIA, PRESSURE ON VOA BUREAU, INCLUDING KAPOOR CAN PROBABLY BE KEPT IN BOUNDS. WE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR KAPOOR'S SITUATION CAREFULLY. MILLER CONCURS. HEMSING

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